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ABSTRACT

A national survey of Master's programs for teachers of English as a Second Language (N=63) found that significant numbers of non-native-speakers (NNSs) are enrolled in these programs. The survey questions were presented in five areas: (1) numbers of students and native language/culture backgrounds; (2) admissions requirements; (3) academic needs; (4) follow-up information on graduates; and (5) attitudes of faculty toward the presence of foreign students. While admissions and degree requirements are generally the same for native-speakers (NSs) and NNSs, most programs require some evidence of English proficiency from the NNSs. Problems reported for NNSs relate primarily to English proficiency and financial limitations. However, while many programs reported that their NNSs were weak in English proficiency, most did not want to add an additional English course for the NNSs. It is concluded that concerns about creating double standards have been raised, and that institutional resources, financial and staff, are too limited to allow for an additional course. Most programs appear to see little or no difference in practical training required of NSs and NNSs. Faculty seem to feel some ambivalence about NNSs in the Master's programs; while nearly all faculty members felt NNSs were an asset, not all faculty were eager to attract more NNSs to such programs. Additional research is planned. (MSE)

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A SURVEY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN MA-TESOL PROGRAMS

by
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Master's programs in teaching English to speakers of other languages (MA-TESOL) in the United States are accepting growing numbers of non-native speakers (NNSs) of English. For the first time, there are many programs in which a minority of the candidates are native speakers (NS) of English. How are programs responding to changes brought about by the growing numbers of NNSs in MA-TESOL programs? On the basis of a perspective described by Strevens (1980) and piloting begun last year by the authors (England, 1987; Roberts and Shields, 1987) a survey was distributed to 123 MA-TESOL programs, most of which are listed in the *Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States* (Frank-McNeil, 1986) in order to discover how programs were adapting to this change. The survey had a response rate of 57%. Of those returned, seven indicated that the institution either no longer had a program or provided coursework for endorsements or specializations but not for an academic degree. Results were compiled on 63 surveys. The survey questions were presented in five broad areas: 1) numbers of students and native language/cultural backgrounds; 2) admissions requirements; 3) academic needs; 4) follow-up information on graduates; and 5) attitudes of faculty toward the presence of foreign students now and in the future.

Of 2,401 students in the 63 programs, 1,021 or 42.5% are NNSs. The four major languages/cultures represented are 39% Chinese (27% - Republic of China; 10% - People's Republic of China and .5% - Hong Kong); 15% Japanese;

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15% Spanish (6% - South and Central America; 4% - Mexico; 2% - Spain); and 7% Korean. In terms of admissions requirements, only three programs indicated that there are differences between the admissions requirements for NSs and NNSs. Nearly all programs (87%) required a Bachelor's GPA; the average requirement was 3.0. An English proficiency test is the only requirement for NNSs not made of NSs (though some programs reported that they are considering adding a writing requirement for NSs). Fifty-three programs (94%) require TOEFL, with an average score of 550. Twenty-two percent of the programs require GRE, though some require only the verbal section. Other requirements mentioned by respondents included one or more of the following: an in-house English proficiency test; the ETS TSE (Educational Testing Service Test of Spoken English); the TELP, an English placement test; a university writing test; a speaking test; the Miller Analogies test; a writing sample; and others.

Richards and Crookes'(1988) found that approximately 24% of the programs they surveyed have no practicum. Our results were similar, with about 22% (10 programs) responding that they have no practical training requirement. Forty-five (71%) of programs in the present study list practical training as a requirement for graduation, which may be waived for students with prior teaching experience. One respondent indicated that there is some concern over placement of NNSs for the practicum. Another respondent commented that they only have a placement problem when they have a NNS with poor spoken English, which seldom occurs. The length of the practicum varies widely-- one semester, two semesters, 100 hours, five credits, three quarters, one month, one year, one and a half semesters, six weeks, two terms, 20 MA hours, or one quarter. The settings for practical training

include: ESL campus program (96%), high school (53%), elementary school (49%), community college (44%), adult program (64%), and ESL program off campus (42%). Interestingly, the responses indicate that NSs and NNSs are treated equally; all students have experience in all settings and the setting often depends on student interest.

An average of 90% of the NNSs complete the program and most do so on time, though more NNSs than NSs finish late. About half the respondents agreed that NNSs have more difficulty completing the program than NSs: among the most significant causes cited for this difficulty were English proficiency and financial limitations. Cultural adaptation and work load tied as the third most significant factors.

82% of the NNSs return to their countries upon completion of their programs and 43% of the programs had some follow-up information on their NNS graduates. The breakdown on their professional activities is as follows: teach ESL full-time (58%), teach ESL part-time (18%), write materials (1.5%), train teachers (5%), write tests (5%), work in a related field (5.5%), work neither in related field nor in ESL (4%), other, such as graduate studies (1.8%).

The last section of the survey probed faculty attitudes about the numbers of NNSs in the programs. Ninety-five percent of the respondents agreed that the MA-TESOL faculty viewed the NNSs positively, and 97% felt that NS and NNS students work well together: NNSs "are an invaluable asset." Another stated that NNSs "add a needed dimension [and] act as a challenge to native speakers." Seventy-eight percent did not think that there were too many

NNS students in the program, yet 51% were either not sure or disagreed that they hope to attract more NNSs to the program. This ambivalence was expressed by one respondent who said: "We are generally comfortable with the presence of foreign students in our program." Sixty-seven percent believe that their program does not require adjustments to accomodate NNS students. One respondent indicated that while NNSs bring special problems, these problems are dealt with gladly since the students are viewed as an asset. At least one program offers coursework and tutoring assistance to bring candidates to near-native fluency. In several cases, respondents indicted that strict admissions requirements help keep problems of language and academic ability to a minimum. General comments provided by respondents indicated the difficulty and sensitivity of assessing faculty attitudes, which is natural, and the value and interest of a survey such as this. For example, one respondent commented that "the concentration of NNSs from Asia presents special problems for TESOL programs. Too bad your questionnaire does not go into the area of classroom participation (or lack of) on the part of NNSs."

The results of this survey indicate that there are indeed significant numbers of NNSs in MA-TESOL programs in the United States. While admissions and degree requirements are in general the same for NSs and NNSs, most programs require some evidence of English proficiency from the NNSs. Problems reported for NNSs related primarily to English proficiency and financial limitations. Yet while many programs reported that their NNSs were weak in English proficiency, most did not want to add an additional course for NNSs. Perhaps there is concern about creating double standards,

or perhaps institutional resources (both financial and staff) are simply too stretched to allow for an additional course.

Also of interest is the finding that most programs appear to view little or no difference between NSs and NNSs in terms of the practical training experience required. Informal discussions with colleagues have revealed concern over NNSs teaching ESL in the United States, but the responses showed almost no concern for practical training needs particular to NNSs. Just one respondent expressed that concern in stating that finding off campus opportunities for NNSs to teach was difficult, and learners on campus resent being taught by NNSs, even if only for a short time.

Finally, the section on faculty attitudes indicated some ambivalency about the NNSs in these programs. While nearly all felt they were an asset, not all were eager to attract more. Perhaps, again, resources are already stretched to the limit, and no more students, whether NS or NNS, can be accomodated. In addition, there was little sense that programs had made any adjustments for these students; perhaps this indicated an awareness that changes would have to be made were the numbers to increase.

To summarize, the results of this survey are necessarily general. In the future we will be following up on areas that seem to us particularly important and interesting, such as curricular requirements, the role of NNSs in practica, and faculty attitudes. It is our hope that this will enable us, as a profession, to better understand and meet the needs of our changing student population.

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